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DoD announces Iraq deployment adjustments

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department will keep about 6,500 experienced troops on the ground through the Iraqi elections, currently scheduled for Jan. 27.

Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division and the 1st Infantry Division headquarters, both currently in Iraq, were officially told about the deployment adjustment by their commanders Oct. 28, according to a senior DoD official.

The affected troops, who had originally been slated for 10-month deployments, will now serve 12 months on the ground, the deployment timeframe most Army units serve in Iraq.

The official said the 10-month deployments originally planned for these units were part of a plan to stagger rotations to avoid overload-

ing the military transportation and logistics systems.

As troops in Iraq were getting official word of the extension, members of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division headquarters learned Oct. 28 that their upcoming deployment will be adjusted by 30 to 60 days, the official said. The headquarters troops mobilized May 27 to train for their mission at Fort Drum, N.Y.

The DoD official said with an increase in violence and the shift of the Iraqi elections from early January to Jan. 27, Army Gen. George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, preferred to avoid swapping out a headquarters element during the critical Iraqi election period.

Casey made the official request in late September, and Army Gen. John Abizaid, the head of U.S. Central Command, made the decision Oct. 16, with the concurrence of

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, the official said.

The adjustments will keep an estimated 3,500 members of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, or "Blackjack Brigade," in Iraq an additional two months, not to exceed their "12-month boots-on-the-ground" goal, said the official.

Also, about 3,000 soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division headquarters, based in Wurzburg, Germany, will remain in Iraq for the adjusted time. The "Big Red One" headquarters was originally scheduled to be replaced by the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters before the Iraqi elections.

Although these adjustments continue to keep the deployments to the 12-month goal, said the official, he understands the troops' frustration over the extension. Some affected Soldiers were expecting to leave Iraq as soon as this month.

But those troops also "understand that military duty means the mission comes first," the official noted.

"Our mission is to get the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government and the Iraqi security forces in place so that they can achieve self-governance," he said.

Meanwhile, about 3,000 members of the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters will alter their deployment by 30 to 60 days, the official said. The decision is no reflection of the guardsmen's capabilities, he stressed. "The 42nd Infantry Division is trained, ready and equipped to execute this rotation," he said.

The official said deploying them sooner simply didn't make sense. Much of the equipment they will use in Iraq will still be in use by the 1st Infantry Division troops they will replace. And although leaders considered

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Multinational leaders discuss reconstruction of Iraq

Story and photo by Spc. Nicole Welch

Multi-National Corps-Iraq Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Multinational troops from 28 countries around the world united at the Senior National Representatives Conference Oct. 23 on Camp Victory South here to discuss topics essential to the future of Iraq.



Iraqi Maj. Gen. Nesayef Khudaier poses a question during an update on coalition civil affairs projects in various cities around Iraq at the Senior National Representatives Conference at Camp Victory South in Baghdad, Iraq, Oct. 23.

The conference, organized by Italian Brig. Gen. Carmine DePascale, focused on the topics concerning the reconstruction of Iraq, such as the current and projected state of the Iraqi security forces as well as various civil affairs projects taking place around the country.

"The basic goal of this conference is building and improving the quality of life for the Iraqis," DePascale said. "It means we are working in partnership with Iraqis to make a better and new Iraq. We want Iraqis to be able to be proud to call Iraq home, a country where it's worth living. We pull together representatives from nearly 30 countries. It's a great project for the reconstruction and reconstitution of Iraqi armed forces. We're cooperating every day, sharing friendships and working together to solve a problem."

Romania, Japan, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Korea, Australia, Ukraine, Georgia and Iraq were just a few of the countries with representatives in attendance. Each representative was nominated by his country to participate in the conference.

The discussion of recent water and sewer rehabilitation efforts affecting about four million of Iraq's residents and Commanders Emergency Response Programs in Samarra, Baghdad, Fallujah and other cities around Iraq were highlighted under the civil affairs portion of the conference.

Senior national representatives were also given details on the numbers of Iraqi forces being trained, how they are being trained, equipment details and current status of training for the Iraqi police.

Representatives from countries around the globe said they

understood the importance of the conference and look forward to achieving multinational unity in favor of improving the lives of the Iraqi people.

"It's a really great gathering together with the coalition to have all countries united supporting the Iraqis," said Iraqi Maj. Gen. Nesayef Khudaier. "They are helping free Iraq and rebuild Iraq and make democracy possible. It's really a great thing. On behalf of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi armed forces, I'd like to thank all the coalition forces who are helping us. It's easy to make someone smile for a while, but the difficult thing is to keep them happy all the time. And they are doing their job, to make the Iraqis happy all the time."

The Senior National Representative Conference takes place several times a year, though the October conference was bigger than previous ones and focused more on the reconstruction of Iraq.

"This conference has been very important because we view all things that will help us support the Iraqi people," said El Salvadoran Col. Jorge Lara. "It's also a good idea to have the conference in order for coalition officers to be updated about what's happening in Iraq."

"This conference is a good opportunity for multinational troops to achieve their objectives, and it's a good opportunity to get to know representatives from coalition countries, the officers and generals of Multi-National Force-Iraq. New ones constantly appear because of the rotations in and out of the country," said Lt. Col. Ioan Rob, of the Romanian Army.

As war changes, so must homeland defense

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The nature of war has changed, and the United States must change to meet the new threats, the Defense Department's top homeland defense civilian said here Oct. 28.

Paul McHale, the assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense, spoke at the 35th Fletcher Conference. This year's theme is "Planning for and Responding to Threats to the U.S. Homeland."

He said the nature of war has fundamentally changed in the last three decades. McHale, a Marine Reserve colonel, said his generation of officers trained for a conflict with the Soviet Union.

"A conflict involved a hostile nation state or coalition of hostile nation states — the Warsaw Pact," he said. "Throughout our history, we believed it took the resources of a nation state to threaten the United States."

But that has changed. "Transnational terrorist groups — unaffiliated with nations, but taking advantage of safe havens — can now acquire miniaturized weapons, including weapons of mass destruction that would bring to them ... the destructive capacity that in the past could only be associated with the resources of a country," McHale said.

These groups could acquire and would use weapons of mass destruction, he said.

McHale shared the draft of the proposed Homeland Defense and Civil Defense Strategy. Pentagon officials stressed that the strategy is only a draft, and changes may still occur until Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld signs the policy.

McHale said the common theme in the strategy is that a passive defense — one implemented only after the threat becomes clear — is too slow to be effective.

"A passive defense — a reactive defense — is a formula for failure," he said.

Al Qaeda and similar groups are brutal and malevolent, but "they are quite professional," McHale noted. Terrorists look for seams in defenses and attack them, he said.

"We must seize the initiative," he pointed out. Defenses must change daily, and defenses must be in depth and layered.

He said the principal objective of the draft strategy is to anticipate the attack. The United States must identify the approaching threat at the earliest possible time.

The American military applying pressure in Afghanistan forced Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda leaders into the mountains. This had a direct impact on al Qaeda operations, he said.

Defeating the threats as far away from U.S. shores is another focus of the strategy. He said the idea is to push out the borders of interdiction.

"From our perspective, homeland defense begins overseas," McHale said. "When Marines and Soldiers went into Kandahar during mili-

tary actions against the Taliban in Afghanistan, their achievement in Kandahar contributed directly to the security in California and Kansas."

Another portion of the strategy is to ensure that no enemy attack will degrade U.S. ability to project power.

The strategy also looks to ensure DoD ability to help civil authorities in case where defenses fail and there is an attack with weapons of mass destruction. He said al Qaeda does not launch single attacks. The military must be prepared to help in the event al Qaeda launching multiple attacks using these weapons.

Finally, the strategy calls for DoD to share its knowledge and expertise with state, local and international partners. He said the services have been prepared to work in contaminated environments since the chemical attacks of World War I. "DoD has the legal and moral obligation to migrate those capabilities to the civilian community," he said.

JCCs throughout Salah Ad Din Province tested

By Spc. Sherree Casper

196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT, Iraq — Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and Iraqi officials met Oct. 27 at the Provincial Joint Coordination Center here to assess a recent three-day exercise that tested the emergency-response capabilities of local services.

The Salah Ad Din Province JCC Readiness Exercise was the brainchild of Capt. Jose H. Ocasio, the Iraqi security forces coordinator for the 2nd BCT, 1st ID. Ocasio said the local JCCs throughout Salah Ad Din as well as the provincial one headquartered in Tikrit serve 1.4 million Iraqis. A JCC is located in every major city of the province, including Tikrit, Baiji, Samarra, Balad, Ad Dujayl, Ad Dawr, Tuz and Ad Duluyiah. A JCC is currently under

construction in Ash Sharqat.

The Oct. 25-27 exercise had several objectives, organizers said. While it measured the local and provincial JCCs' communications and reactionary capabilities, it also showed what areas needed improvement. JCC staff were trained on procedures and given a common understanding of them.

"We wanted to test the communication links and test every JCC staff to see how they would react," Ocasio said.

Staffs at the JCCs throughout the province were given 12 crisis scenarios to handle during a course of 72 hours, from terrorists firing on a peaceful demonstration to a report of a car bomb.

"We needed to know where they were in their capabilities," Ocasio said.

He pointed out that the various JCCs across the province "range in different capabilities at this time."

Dept of Defense's Anthrax vaccination program paused

Submitted by Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

WASHINGTON — The Department of Defense is currently reviewing an injunction issued Oct. 27 by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia regarding the department's anthrax vaccination program.

The injunction did not question the safety and effectiveness of the anthrax vaccine or the immunization program in the DoD. The injunction centered on FDA procedural issues stating that additional public comment should have been sought before the FDA issued its final rule in December of 2003.

The Defense Department's anthrax-vaccination program is an important force protection measure, officials said. Research conducted by several prominent medical experts and a report by the National Academy of Sciences

has determined that the anthrax vaccine is safe and effective for all forms of anthrax exposure.

As a result of the injunction, the Department of Defense will pause giving anthrax vaccinations until the legal situation is clarified.

The ruling is similar to the judge's injunction issued in December 2003. At that time, DoD paused the vaccination program pending clarification of the legal issues. The 2003 injunction was lifted roughly two weeks later.

DoD remains convinced that the anthrax immunization program complies with all the legal requirements and that the anthrax vaccine is safe and effective, officials said.

A copy of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's memorandum concerning the suspense of immunizations is available online at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2004/d20041027anthrax.pdf>

U.S. Marines welcome arrival of Black Watch

Multi-National Forces-Iraq Press Release

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq — A British armored battle group of approximately 850 soldiers, led by the 1st Battalion of the Black Watch Regiment, has redeployed from Basra to an area south of Baghdad to bolster U.S. and Iraqi forces hunting down insurgents.

The move comes amid mounting efforts by multinational forces operating in support of the Iraqi Interim government to root out anti-Iraqi forces bent on creating chaos and disrupting national elections in January.

Black Watch has taken up positions in Babil province, where the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit has been operating since July.

Led by Lt. Col. James Cowan, the British troops are highly trained and well equipped. Reinforcing the Black Watch will be a reconnaissance unit from the Queen's Dragoon Guards, a light infantry unit from the Royal Marines and a host of support personnel, including engineers, logisticians and medics.

The commander of the 24th MEU welcomed the arrival of the allies to the Marines' zone.

Also assigned to the MEU are the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment and a variety of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy detachments.

The beefed-up MEU has worked closely with the ISF — including the 2nd Ministry of the Interior Commando Battalion, the 507th Iraqi National Guard Battalion, elements of the Iraqi Specialized Special Forces and the Iraqi SWAT team — to stamp out the insurgency in

northern Babil and southern Baghdad.

They stepped up their joint efforts in early October. On Oct. 5, ISF and Marines launched their most sweeping operation to date, moving against numerous targets throughout their zone in a continuing campaign to restore security and stability to the province.

In the past three months, more than 500 insurgents have been rounded up in scores of raids, cordon-and-knock searches and citywide sweeps throughout the area's key population centers, including Lutafiyah, Mahmudiyah, Yusufiyah, Iskandariyah, Haswah and Musayyib.

With the addition of Black Watch and the steady addition of newly trained ISF, an increasingly potent force is set to intensify its operations further.



Up-armored vehicle effort progressing

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The assembly lines are moving 24/7 to keep up with the demand for up-armored vehicles in Iraq and for conversion kits to add extra protection to vehicles already there.

Gary Motsek, the director of support operations for the U.S. Army Materiel Command, said the effort to provide increased vehicle protection against grenades, improvised explosive devices and small-arms fire is progressing fast and furiously as demand continues to increase.

Nearly 5,100 up-armored humvees have been delivered to Army and Marine Corps units in Iraq, with another 724 on ships bound for the theater, Motsek said.

There, the up-armored humvees are being issued to units based on their missions — regardless whether they're Army or Marine Corps or active or reserve component,

Motsek emphasized. "These factors have no bearing whatsoever on who's getting them," he said. "It's all based on the missions, and who has the greatest need for them," he said.

U.S. Central Command's current requirement for up-armored humvees, one that has continued to increase, is for 8,105 up-armored humvees in Iraq.

It's a number Motsek said was once considered almost unthinkable. At the beginning of the Iraqi war, the Army had only about 500 up-armored humvees, called "UAHs," in its inventory. These were primarily used by military-police units in their rear-protection role, he said.

No longer. Because they're easy to maneuver and just the right size for many of the missions being conducted in Iraq, humvees have become "the platform of choice," Motsek said.

"If anyone would have told me a

humvee would be the platform of choice in a war, I would have told them they're crazy," he said.

Motsek said AM General, the company that builds the up-armored humvees, has gone into around-the-clock production to churn out the vehicles as quickly as possible but still is able to produce only several hundred a month.

"There's a perception that all you need to do is cut some carbon steel and slap it on the side of a vehicle," Motsek said. "That's simply not the case."

In addition to increased armor protection, up-armored humvees feature more rugged suspension systems able to handle the added weight and ballistic-resistant glass. They also include air conditioners that enable crews to operate with the windows up, even in stifling temperatures.

Unwilling to leave deployed troops vulnerable while the production lines struggled to keep up with

the demand, the Army came up with a second solution: add-on armor kits.

Not confident that commercial contractors could respond to the need quickly enough, Motsek said the Army ultimately designed and designed its own add-on armor kits in record time.

Engineers at the Army Research Laboratory in Adelphi, Md., went to the drawing board to design the kits "over a weekend," he said. The Army field tested them at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md., to ensure that they met strict ballistics-protection standards.

Even as the field tests were taking place, the Army started ordering the special steel and bullet-resistant glass needed to build the vehicles, he said.

That calculation proved to be decisive in moving the effort forward with unprecedented speed. Within six weeks of putting pen to paper to come up with a design,

Motsek said the Army had the first kits in hand, ready for shipment to Iraq.

In contrast, the normal procurement process takes five to seven years.

The Army also field tested prototype add-on armor kits from several contractors, Motsek said, ultimately settling on one produced by O'Gara-Hess & Eisenhardt.

Today, Army employees at four depots, two arsenals and an ammunition plant are working three shifts a day to produce the Army-designed kits to keep up with demand. Motsek said they've produced 8,800 add-on-armor kits, 8,700 of which have already been installed in vehicles in Iraq. O'Gara-Hess & Eisenhardt has provided 289 more kits, he said.

Yet despite the progress, Motsek said employees at production facilities keep their eye on the demand

See **ARMOR**, Page 10

Dont drop the dime



Sgt. John Queen

Staff Sgt. Julian Jimenez, of Midland, Texas, tries to balance a dime on a cleaning rod sticking out of the barrel of his weapon. This exercise helps to check his stability as he pulls the trigger. Jimenez is a cavalry scout assigned to F Troop, 9th Cavalry, one of the 1st Cavalry Division's brigade reconnaissance troops in Baghdad, Iraq.

Tricare benefits improved significantly for reservists

Submitted by Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

WASHINGTON — The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2005, signed by the president Oct. 28, improves the overall health benefits available to guardsmen, reservists and their families and makes permanent several of the Tricare benefits authorized "temporarily" under defense legislation last year while extending secretarial authorization for others.

"Our reservists and guardsmen who are called to duty and their families deserve these great new benefits for their service to their country," said Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We welcome these new Tricare provisions as a means to improve active- and reserve-component force readiness and to enhance family member access to care."

For reserve-component members with delayed effective date orders to serve on active duty in support of a contingency operation for more than 30 days, the new legislation permanently authorizes Tricare eligibility for up to 90 days prior to member's activation date for eligible members and their families. It also makes permanent a 180-day transitional Tricare health benefit after deactivation for Transitional Assistance Management Program-eligible members and their families. Members must also now receive a comprehensive physical examination prior to separating from active-duty service.

The legislation also authorizes waiver of the Tricare standard and extra deductibles of reserve-component family members for members ordered to active duty for more than 30 days and authorizes Tricare to pay nonparticipating providers up to 115 percent of the Tricare maximum allowable charge, which enhances continuity of care for these family members with their civilian providers. To ensure seamless implementation of these provisions, Tricare has extended the Tricare Reserve Family Demonstration Project through Oct.

31, 2005. The demonstration, which began on Sept. 14, 2001, was due to end Monday.

Members of the reserve component called after Sept. 11, 2001, to serve for more than 30 days in support of a contingency operation who served or will continuously serve for 90 or more days are now given the opportunity to purchase Tricare standard healthcare coverage for themselves and their family members after they demobilize. The member must sign an agreement to continue serving for a period of one year or more in the selected reserve after their active duty ends. For every 90 days of consecutive active-duty service, the member and family member may purchase one year of Tricare standard coverage for the same period they commit to serve in the selected reserves. Members will be able to purchase the new Tricare standard coverage on a self-only or self-and-family basis. The Tricare standard coverage under this program will begin once the member's eligibility for 180 days of transitional Tricare coverage under the TAMP ends. Members who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation for 90 days or more on or after Sept. 11, 2001, and were released from active duty before Oct. 28 or within 180 days of that date may enter into an agreement to serve continuously in the selected reserve for a period of one or more years and begin participation in this program at that time. These members must enter into this agreement to serve in the selected reserve within one year of Oct. 28.

Congress requires implementation of the new Tricare standard enrollment program by April 26.

"We have already begun working on these provisions and will implement them on time," Winkenwerder said.

Additional information on the new permanent Tricare provisions, including start dates, benefits and requirements under each of the new permanent provisions, will be posted on the Tricare web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/> and the reserve affairs Web site at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra> as soon as each is ready to begin.

PERSPECTIVES

New dangers with post-dated checks

Commentary by Sandy Goss

FORT MONROE, Va. — Have you ever written a post-dated check?

Unless you're Donald Trump or Bill Gates, you probably have.

Most of us have mortgages or rent payments due on the first of the month. Just last month you might have written your check on the 25th and dated it for the 1st before slipping it in the mail to the bank. You wanted to ensure that your check arrived on time and since your Army paycheck hits the bank on the 30th, there's no problem, right?

Wrong.

New policy to eliminate leeway

A young Soldier's spouse tries to make it to payday, but all the milk for the baby is gone so the parent goes to the commissary and does what generations of folks have frequently done, write a check based upon their "pay coming in tomorrow." Used to be they

could get away with this, but since Oct. 28, they're going to get whacked — because the money will be electronically removed from the bank account as soon as the check is presented for payment. If the funds are not there, the check will be returned for nonsufficient funds — with the associated fees.

Checks to be like debit cards

A new law, called "Check 21," went into effect Oct. 28. You can learn about Check 21 in exhausting detail elsewhere, but in essence, the law effectively changes our paper checks into debit cards. While the banks don't have to, they can cash the check as soon as it is presented for payment. Don't tell me that the payable date precludes this; checks are cashed early all the time. If the money isn't in your account when you actually write the check, the instant the check is presented for payment, it may bounce.

Won't matter if it's for the mortgage or baby formula, your NSF check is returned. A \$30

bounced check fee from the bank and another \$30 from the mortgage company or commissary. "Late Mortgage Payment" goes into your financial history, yada, yada, yada.

Bottom line, up front: you can't "float" or "post-date" checks anymore. If you do, it may cost you hundreds of dollars.

Failure to adjust means paying

The advent of the technical ability to instantaneously cash a check, coupled with the ever-increasing pressure facing banks to maximize profits (which come from all those nickel and dime fees everyone complains about, including bounced-check charges) will provide a potential windfall of additional profits because a lot of people will continue to try and post-date checks or write them based upon what used to be the mechanical, time-consuming check-processing practices of years gone by.

It will take these people some time to adjust — which must be viewed as a potential

revenue stream for the banks and a potential financial disaster for the unwary. (While the mechanics of processing checks will change — the actual paper checks will never be returned to your bank — the electronic copies of the cancelled checks will be kept for proof of payment.)

As leaders, we must ensure that our Soldiers and civilians know that the Army is not the only institution undergoing massive transformation and restructuring. The entire financial industry is changing, as well, and we need to exhaust all available efforts to ensure that the hard-earned wages of our Soldiers are not squandered on bounced-check charges.

We must ensure our Soldiers know this: your check is now a debit card.

Editor's note: Sandy Goss is the public affairs officer for the Installation Management Agency — Northeast Region at Fort Monroe, Va.

Who will divorce? That's easily predictable

Commentary by Capt. Gary Murvin

According to researcher Robert Waldinger, a Harvard Medical School associate professor of psychiatry, the average college student can predict whether your marriage will end in divorce within five years with 85 percent accuracy.

Waldinger, who is quoted in a June article in the online health magazine WebMd, cites six groups of college students that predicted who would be divorced in five years with overwhelming accuracy. They did this purely from their gut reactions to viewing videotapes of couples arguing over things like communication, finances and household chores.

What caught the eye of the college students, which led them to identify which couples were heading toward divorce, was how the men in the tapes consistently lost their empathy and became emotionally hostile and how the women they observed tended to express sadness while also losing their empathy.

Renowned marriage researcher John Gottman explains how this works in his book "Why Marriages Succeed or Fail."

Men and women respond differently to the same argument. Guys quickly feel threatened, which causes stress hormones

to kick-in, which in turn sends the heart rate up, sometimes sky high. The average male heartbeat is about 72 beats per minute. In women, it's between 76-80 BPM. However, in the midst of a heated argument, a man's heartbeat can quickly jump to 100-plus BPM. If you know anything about biology, you know that logical thinking is physically impossible in this heightened state of arousal.

In reality, Gottman says that it becomes problematic to have a profitable discussion when the heartbeat goes up even 10 percent above average, which equates to 79-80 BPM in men and 83-88 BPM in women. During this aroused state is the very time when some will cross the line and become violent with their spouses.

In contrast to men, women want to remain connected to the discussion process, or argument, and get it resolved. Thus, when a husband (feeling stressed) says he no longer wants to talk about the matter, his wife will tend to feel abandoned and move toward him to press the argument even harder, not realizing that he and she are quickly losing their ability to remain in a logical frame of mind.

Make no mistake. Neither wives nor husbands are able to come up with workable solutions in this aroused state. It is

biologically impossible.

Gottman says this pattern must be interrupted so the couple can calm down and try to reach a solution when they are not so tense. He suggests (and yes, it sounds hokey) that men stop and take their own pulse when they feel themselves heating up inside. If the heartbeat is up to the 10 percent above-normal threshold, then husband and wife need to agree to stop and take at least a 30-minute breather.

Then, after both of them calm down, they can simply pick up where they left off in the same discussion.

The hardest part of this will likely be to get the agreement of cooperation from husbands and wives before the next discussion arises. Once a wife knows that her husband is watching out for their corporate welfare when he says he doesn't feel like discussing the matter any longer, they can agree to let it go for awhile and then come back to it a little later at an agreed-upon time.

Otherwise, the couple may be the last ones to know that they, too, are heading for divorce court.

Editor's note: Capt. Gary Murvin is the chief of Social Work Services, Ireland Army Community Hospital at Fort Knox, Ky.

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Kiljoy
By Chip Beck

Iraqis move forward with help from local leaders

Story and photos by
Pfc. Brian Schroeder
10th Mountain Division
Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — While farmers in the United States are harvesting their crops before the chill of winter, Iraqi farmers are preparing to sow the seeds of a new growing season and their newfound democracy.

Fifty local workers unloaded six truckloads of wheat and barley seed to distribute to local farmers in the town of Radwaniya.



An Iraqi child lends a hand with the distribution of wheat and barley seed for his community.

Representatives from the local farmers' cooperative picked up the 132 tons of wheat and 20 tons of barley seed to distribute to more than 3,000 local farmers.

A local lawyer present for the distribution said that during Saddam Hussein's regime, the seed-distribution process was conducted in an unfair and dodgy way. He said that the majority of the seed would be taken to the black market and sold, while the small remaining amount, if any, would go to the farmers.

"This is the first time they have tried to do it the best way and fair way," the lawyer said.

"They plan and control the distribution process. The members of the farmers' societies have to sign for how much they receive and how much they deliver. That way we can control the process. I can say I am grateful to (Task Force 2-14) for doing this for my people."

Capt. Joseph LaBarbera, the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment civil military operations officer, said Task Force 2-14 has spent more than \$1 million on civic projects such as water pumps, water-purification projects, school refur-

bishments, repairs to damages that occurred during the war and providing wheat and barley seed for local farmers.

"The seed distribution is a really big boost to the agriculture economy," LaBarbera said. "This is seed they can grow, make into bread and sell in the marketplace, which will help the local economy, too."

The local Iraqis who accept donations or jobs supported by coalition forces put themselves and their families in jeopardy. Insurgents will target these citizens who are trying to begin a new life in their new democratic country, the lawyer said.

"Our people need to live in peace," he said. "But who pushes them? The terrorists. Our people are scared. They keep themselves in their houses. They try to be helpful with the Americans, but they can't, because they are scared for their lives. The terrorists are killing anybody — Iraqi police, Iraqi National Guard, interpreters. They know their houses, and they can kill them anytime. They cannot defend themselves, so they depend on luck and Allah. They are extremely brave for what they are doing, trying to live their lives again."

This particular village has not had any improvised explosive devices or rockets fired at any coalition forces since Task Force 2-14 took it over in their area of operations, LaBarbera said. He attributes this to the strong leadership and security the leaders of the community provide for the citizens.

In a few of the villages, there are leaders who have a strong desire to help their communities and not take



Men from a local community work together to unload six tractor-trailers full of wheat and barley seed for distribution to local farmers in the town of Radwaniyai, Iraq.

advantage of the community's civic projects, as some leaders had done during the previous regime, LaBarbera said. He suggested that promoting these local leaders would allow the citizens of the villages to better help themselves.

"The key is to strengthen the credibility of the local leaders so they can then take control of their com-

munities and instill security and welfare," he said. "If we can help build a strong local government, it will boost the credibility of the Iraqi government. If we can give those guys credibility and support them through projects, where they can build upon their existing status in the community, they will be on their way to building a stable government."

Army converting some billets to civilian positions

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The Army is converting some 5,000 military billets — mostly staff — to civilian positions to free up more Soldiers for other needed duties, DoD's top civilian personnel official said here Oct. 27.

"There are a significant amount of (military) units that don't deploy by definition," Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S. C. Chu told members of the Association of the United States Army at their annual meeting. Therefore, he said, DoD is looking "at using civilians in these positions."

That initiative, Chu observed, is part of DoD's efforts to transform and realign its military and civilian workforce to become more efficient and to better meet 21st century challenges like the war on global terrorism.

Chu said the department wants to inject more flexibility in managing its 2.7 million active- and reserve-component service members, 650,000 civilian workers and 96,000 nonappropriated-fund employees.

Regarding military force structure, "a significant degree of

rebalancing is necessary," Chu said. For example, he pointed to a current project that draws down outmoded active-duty field-artillery units and replaces them with high-demand military-police units.

The current voluntary military system "is splendid," Chu said, noting that "we are not going to have a draft."

However, Chu said, DoD is looking into "the short tenure" of officers in their posts. Current two-year postings are "far too fast," he said, and don't give officers enough time to effect meaningful changes.

Another recently adopted initiative involves calling up reservists to active duty for training before they're mobilized, Chu said. For example, he pointed to the recruitment of 200 reservists for training in Arabic. Forty of those linguists, he noted, were recently deployed to Iraq.

And, he said, DoD still is evaluating if 300,000 military slots can be converted to civilian positions.

Changes are also in store for the department's civilians, Chu observed, noting that Congress last year approved DoD's proposal to overhaul its personnel system as part of the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act.

The adoption of the National Security Personnel System now being crafted, Chu said, will create a "more responsive and flexible" DoD civilian workforce.

The NSPS, he pointed out, would "make the civilian component of our personnel system equally effective with the military" force.

NSPS, according to the system's Web site, gives DoD greater authority over hiring, rewarding and firing civilian employees. The new system does away with the current 150 occupational/pay scales in favor of four broad pay bands. Under NSPS, according to the Web site, employees are rewarded for performance instead of longevity.

NSPS regulations are being written now, Chu said, noting that parts of the new system will be brought on line in mid-2005, with total NSPS implementation envisioned in the 2007-2008 time-frame.

The NSPS and other personnel initiatives — like the recent Air Force merger of the management of its senior military officers and senior executive service civilians — will expand DoD civilians' role in departmental affairs, Chu said, while fostering the "one force" concept.

Operation Amber Waves

Agriculture driving the Taji economy

Story and photos by
Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

TAJI, Iraq — Delivering 156 tons of wheat seeds to a central distribution point for farmers of the Taji area, the 1st Cavalry Division's 39th Brigade Combat Team



A farmer loads 110-pound bags of wheat seed onto the back of his truck. Soldiers of the 39th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division facilitated the delivery of the seeds during Operation Amber Waves Oct. 19.

launched the beginning phase of Operation Amber Waves Oct. 19.

"Operation Amber Waves is a three-phase plan to help strengthen the agriculture community within Taji," explained Maj. Gordon McCoy, an assistant civil military operations officer for the 39th. The wheat-seed delivery was the first phase, he said, then "we'll be distributing fertilizer and, finally, we'll work with the Ministry of Agriculture to fix the irrigation infrastructure."

McCoy said that bringing the seeds to farmers of the area was a joint effort between multinational forces, members of the Iraqi government and council members in the Taji area.

"This whole thing was a series of different organizations working together. We worked with the council members to make sure farmers knew when and where the seeds were to be distributed as well as working with the Ministry of Agriculture to help store the seeds once they arrived in country."

Agriculture is the center of the Taji economy around which all other forms of commerce rotate, noted several small businessmen gathered at the seed-distribution point.

"Most of the work I do in my garage is fixing equipment farmers use — from their tractors to the cars and trucks they use to bring their harvest to market," said one local businessman, speaking through a translator.

"Most of the businesses in the area operate that way, as a direct extension of the



Soldiers of the 39th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division facilitated the delivery of 156 tons of wheat seed to farmers of the Taji, Iraq, area Oct. 19. The delivery was the first part of what is planned to be a three-phase operation called Operation Amber Waves.

farmers."

Prior to Operation Amber Waves, addressing deficiencies in the farming community has been a priority for the Bowie Brigade, as evidenced by the many civil affairs projects undertaken. From developing roads to facilitate the travel of farmers to bring their crops to market to fixing water pump stations in the area irrigating the parched desert land, helping the farmer has been at the forefront.

"The importance of farming to this area can't be understated," said Maj. Terry Robey, of the 478th Civil Affairs Battalion.

"Most of the projects my team has worked on have kept that as the focus in determining the projects which will return the most impact for this area."

With so many farmers in the area and tons of seeds to pass out, before any distribution could begin, a system needed to be in place to ensure that each farmer got a fair share.

"What the area council members decided to do was have each farmer bring in the deed to their lands," said McCoy. "Based upon how many they owned, that would determine

See AMBER, Page 10

TF Danger medics train ING soldiers

Submitted by 1st Infantry
Division Public Affairs Office

TUZ, Iraq — Medical platoon Soldiers from the 209th Iraqi National Guard Battalion and Task Force Danger Soldiers from the 30th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 120 conducted a mass-casualty training exercise Oct. 22 at the 209th Battalion Annex near here.

This training was a culminating exercise as the 209th ING Battalion stands up its medical platoon to provide for emergency care for its soldiers in their area around Tuz.

The training consisted of reaction to an improvised explosive device on a military convoy, evacuating casualties, medical evaluation and treatment and air-medical-evacuation procedures. The medical teams were combined between the ING medics and the coalition medics to simulate how a real emergency might take place in a joint operation.

The ING medical personnel have been going through training with the help of coalition medical personnel

for the last three months.

"The [ING] soldiers need to know they will be taken care of medically if they get injured that will give them more confidence on the battlefield," said Capt. James McCann, a physician's assistant with Task Force 120 and the person responsible for establishing a medical training center for the 209th ING Battalion. "I have absolute confidence in their abilities and leadership, and I think they are going to go a long way for this National Guard battalion and the future of Iraq."

Sgt Thomas Dillone, a medic for Task Force 120 who was responsible for much of the training for the 209th ING medics, complimented the Iraqi National Guard medics on how they took to the training.

"I have been teaching medics for a number of years, and I have never had more dedicated, more motivated students in my life. They make me happy. They want to learn, and they apply themselves to it," he said. "Making this platoon work is very important to them."

AEF Center commander explains longer USAF cycle

By Senior Airman Sarah Clark
15th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii — The effect of the expanded air and space expeditionary force tour lengths on troop morale was addressed here by the general in charge of the deployment schedule.

Brig. Gen. Steven Hoog, the AEF Center commander, explained how the recent extension to four-month deployments is working out.

"Airmen have saluted smartly, and they're off doing their business," he said.

This new schedule offers greater stability for commanders and a reduction in transportation requirements because Airmen are swapping out three times instead of four during the year, Hoog said.

The deployment-length change to the AEF cycle started Sept. 15. Airmen now get four extra months at home.

"We go for 120 days now (every) 20 months," Hoog said. "In terms of your life back at home, the turmoil has actually decreased because now you have a longer cycle (of down) time."

An AEF assignment does not necessarily mean deployment, but Airmen should be prepared to go

anytime during their 120-day window, he said.

"If you're in a deployable [position], you're supposed to be ready to go on 72-hours notice, regardless," said Hoog. "If you're in a four-month window, you're supposed to be ready to go any day from day one to day 119. What we try to do is give you as much notice as we can — ideally somewhere between 30 and 90 days — and tell you where you're going to go, but you're supposed to be ready that whole time."

Air Force officials are changing in the way they handle war, including the integration of reservists and guardsmen and combining the different armed services to create a larger joint environment.

The reservists and guardsmen "do a great job," said Hoog. "The Guard and Reserve will volunteer to take taskings before (the taskings) flow down to the active duty."

People in certain Air Force specialties are deploying for 179 days, but because they are not trained for their specific task, these deployments are expanded by two to two-and-a-half months of training before deploying.

Additionally, Airmen are integrating with the Army as never before. Several Air Force specialties "have agreed to fill some Army requirements with Air Force bluesuiters," he said. "It's working out superbly."

Byrnes says lessons learned drive training

By Sgt. 1st Class Tammy M. Jarrett
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Lessons learned in combat are the driving force for changes from initial-entry training to advanced professional development, said Gen. Kevin P. Byrnes, the Training and Doctrine Command commander.

Lessons learned are being more rapidly assessed and pushed into the institutional side of training, Byrnes said. The implementation of the lessons-learned process is about one month now compared to five years during peacetime, Byrnes said during a speech here at the 50th Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting Oct. 27.

Just as important is ensuring that the training is relevant to the mission, Byrnes said. To do this, TRADOC has made major changes at its combat training centers and noncommissioned officer schools to ensure that all Soldiers are trained to perform as riflemen and able to do the mission once deployed, Byrnes said.

Initial-entry training

For 2005, the training base will expand to train an additional 27,000 Soldiers in initial-entry training. Byrnes said although challenges lie in the infrastructure and equipment requirements, "we will

be successful in getting our Soldiers trained on the mission."

Given the war and an assessment from veterans coming back from Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and experienced NCOs, three individual tasks and nine collective tasks have been identified that every Soldier must perform before graduating from advanced individual training. Some of those tasks include: react to a grenade attack, evacuate a wounded or injured Soldier, avoid an ambush and conduct a convoy operation.

Byrnes said the goal now in basic and AIT is to train Soldiers to standard on those tasks.

Basic training will remain nine weeks long, but Byrnes said field training will increase by 200 percent, and fitness, combatant and marksmanship emphasis will also go up. Byrnes said he visited Fort Jackson recently and was very impressed with the ability of the school system to react to these changes.

The bottom line is to have every Soldier combat-ready trained and trained to standard on identified individual and collective warrior tasks at the basic-training and advanced-individual-training levels, Byrnes said.

Noncommissioned Officer Education System

Assessed by veterans and senior

command sergeants major, NCOES training changed to challenge, nurture and to help grow returning combat-experienced Soldiers attending professional development.

As of Oct. 1, basic noncommissioned officer and advanced noncommissioned officer courses are now teaching fewer common core tasks, moving away from tasks like drill and ceremony and barracks inspections to more field time and lessons learned to make training more relevant to the mission at hand, Byrnes said.

Byrnes said 37 of the 51 common core tasks have been revised. Some tasks have been moved from ANCOC to BNCOC because "in a combat-experienced force, our junior Soldiers are now far more confident than they were several years ago."

More hours also have been allotted for lessons learned in the Soldiers' particular skill and grade. This is to prepare them "to fight at the next level of their skill," said Byrnes.

Byrnes said that when it comes to changes in training leader development at war, "you can't have a long-term view. You have to have a rapid turnaround point of view, and we think we are bringing that to bear in Training and Doctrine Command."

Iraq in Brief

Adopt-a-highway program cleans streets, makes them safer

BAQUBAH, Iraq — The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division has worked with the residents of Baqubah to develop an adopt-a-highway program to take back the streets.

Each day, more than 100 workers take to the streets as part of the program. This program has greatly reduced the trash and debris in the streets, making the streets safer for multinational forces and local residents, officials said.

Since the program started, adopt-a-highway workers have identified and reported 47 improvised explosive devices to the Iraqi police.

This program has provides local Iraqis with a source of employment and has instilled the pride of a clean and safe Baqubah, officials noted.

Engineers, ING soldiers train together

FORWARD OPERATING BASE REMAGEN, Iraq — Soldiers from Bravo Company, 9th Engineer Battalion and the 30th Iraqi National Guard Bomb Disposal Company conducted joint training on UXO identification and safety Oct. 21-26.

The training occurred during the first week of a 12-week training program designed to bring the 30th ING Bomb Disposal Company up to EOD standards.

'Police station in a box' installed in Samarra

SAMARRA, Iraq — Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 1-26 Infantry installed the seventh "police station in a box" in northeast Samarra Saturday.

As the Iraqi security forces assume a greater role in the protection of the city, they are making more decisions about the mechanics of law enforcement, division officials said. The Iraqi Police Service formally requested the station be installed in the northeastern portion of the city Oct. 26.

Sheep drop in eastern Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division's Company A, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment delivered 33 sheep to residents of the Al Tamar neighborhood here Oct. 20.

The neighborhood formerly was a hotbed of insurgent activity from which rockets and mortars were routinely fired at multinational-force base camps in the area. The delivery was a civil military operation aimed at assisting the needy people in the area during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and to show gratitude for peaceful relations over the past 60 days, according to 1st BCT officials.

Soldiers 'Race for the Cure' at LSA Anaconda

BALAD, Iraq — Soldiers from Logistics Support Area Anaconda here joined forces Sunday to support breast-cancer research by participating in a Race for the Cure.

Staff Sgt. Lupe Garcia, from the 13th Corps Support Command, organized a group of her co-workers to run the 5-kilometer race with her. Garcia has participated in several Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure events in her hometown of Austin, Texas.

Garcia told a co-worker of her plans and the word spread within a day to include 15 other Soldiers. The group registered for the Austin race, received their race T-shirts and met Sunday morning to run together.

Garcia said the main effort of the event was to raise money for breast-cancer research.

Emergency Services Unit conducts exercise

TIKRIT, Iraq — The Tikrit Emergency Service Unit in cooperation with Task Force 1-18 Infantry conducted its second emergency-response exercise Oct. 20 in order to sustain critical skills and demonstrate proficiency.

The exercise was a hostage scenario based in Tikrit that also included the Tikrit Fire Department. The training included an after-action review and retraining to meet the standard.

The Tikrit Emergency Service Unit is composed of the first graduating class taught by the Task Force 1-18 Iraqi police advisors.

They are an elite, well-trained unit designed to respond to a crisis in the city of Tikrit, ideally suited for the upcoming elections, officials said. A second class of 31 personnel is currently training in Tikrit.

Operation Backpack

Students benefit from civil-military operation

By 2nd Lt. Peter George
1-7 Cavalry Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — More than 700 backpacks filled with school supplies brought smiles to the faces of students at the Al Zubaida primary school for girls Oct. 19.

Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's Apache Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 5th Brigade Combat Team made the delivery to children in the southern Baghdad Al Rashid District.

"We influence our zone one Iraqi citizen at a time," said Apache Troop commander Capt. Aaron Welch. "The key to winning this fight is educating the younger generations, and I think this is an excellent way of doing that."

The backpacks were filled with school supplies including stationary, pens, pencils and books that will be used by the students in the school year ahead. Teachers

at the school lined up the students in their classes, where American Soldiers handed them their backpacks. Many of the girls approached the Soldiers timidly, but after prompting from their teachers, remembered their English lessons and responded with a youthful "thank you."

"It makes me feel good to do something nice for these children," said Staff Sgt. Andrew Woodcox. "It actually feels like I am making a difference here."

The Al Zubaida primary school is the sixth school in the Al Rashid district to receive backpacks and school supplies. Welch said his unit will deliver supplies to twelve area schools before Operation Backpack is complete.

"I'm excited about the progress that has been made in the past seven months," Welch said. "Iraq has an extremely bright future that continues along the same traditions and achievements that fill its brilliant history."

Service members are encouraged to submit stories and photographs to the Scimitar. Email your submissions to cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com

Soldier firefighters protect Camp Taji

Story and photos by
Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — In an unassuming concrete structure here, the remnant of a prior regime, a small group of men awaits the next mission.

Their job requires strength, humility, teamwork and courage. They are the firefighters of Camp Taji.

Assembled from the Puerto Rico National Guard's 215th Engineering Detachment and Massachusetts-based Army Reserve units, the 287th and 356th Engineering Detachments, the 1st Cavalry Division firefighters on Camp Taji play a pivotal role as first responders to a variety of situations ranging from hazardous-material cleanup to crash and rescue services.

"As a firefighter, you have to know so much more than how to put out a fire. With all the extra skills the guys here have, we are able to bring so much more to the table than just fighting fires," said Staff Sgt. Alfredo Torres, of the 215th Engineering Detachment. "Many of our guys are certified emergency medical technicians, so we are able to provide assistance to the medical companies here when needed. We have the ability to collect hazardous material and package it for disposal. We are trained in crash and rescue, so we can support the aviation brigade."

In addition to the tasks directly related to their job, the Soldiers of the detachment offer classes and inspect all newly constructed buildings prior to their occupancy.

"About once a month we give fire-prevention classes and instruction on how to properly use a fire extinguisher," said Boston resident Spc. Mohan Pilwah, a

pump operator with the 287th. "Units are also able to come to us and request classes relevant to our field, and we do our best to meet their requirements and provide the training."

With so many tasks for the team to accomplish, teamwork within the group is essential.

"We wouldn't be able to do what we do were it not for the tight bond and sense of brotherhood that exists between each of us," Pilwah noted. "You go charging into a burning building and you just know you can rely on the guy behind you, and it extends beyond that. I know in that every mission I do, the guys with me are going to be there. They've got my back."

And the Soldier firefighters have the back of everyone at Camp Taji.

"You do this because you love helping people," Pilwah said. "And over here, the stakes are so much higher. You know, you do this back home and most folks have insurance, so at least they are financially compensated for anything they may lose. But here — a Soldier's trailer goes up in flames due to a mortar strike, and that's all they've got in the world right now."

When the alarm calling the firefighters to duty sounds, the countdown begins. Within two minutes, the engine company of four personnel don the 85 pounds of protective gear the job requires. They jump into the truck carrying 6,000 gallons of water and speed down the road to the scene of the accident. Steeling themselves for the mission ahead, they repeat an often-used mantra expressed by Salinas, Puerto Rico, resident Spc. William Miranda, of the 215th Engineering Detachment: "I have to win this. I have to beat this fire. I have to save whoever is in danger. I must, above all else, win this."



The last of his equipment having been checked and rechecked, Spc. Pinael Roamel, with the Puerto Rico National Guard's 215th Engineering Detachment, 1st Cavalry Division, stands ready to mount his vehicle and head to the scene of an emergency.



Spc. William Miranda (left) of Salinas, Puerto Rico, helps Spc. Pinael Roamel, of San Juan, Puerto Rico, don the more than 85 pounds of gear each firefighter must wear when responding to an emergency. Both Soldiers are with the 215th Engineering Detachment attached to the 1st Cavalry Division.



Coming together from the Puerto Rico National Guard's 215th Engineering Detachment and the Massachusetts-based 287th and 356th Engineering Detachments, the firefighters of Camp Taji are able to respond to emergency situations with two engine companies.



Above: Spc. Brandon Arther (left) and Spc. Dmitri Schornick, both crew chiefs with the 1st Cavalry Division's Alpha Company "Werewolves," 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, perform an inspection of the aircraft at the end of the day.

Left: Spc. Brandon Arther, a Black Hawk crew chief with the 1st Cavalry Division's Alpha Company "Werewolves," 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, prepares to add engine oil during a routine pre-flight maintenance check.

Crew Chiefs: one job, multiple roles

Story and photos by
Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — What can be said for one can probably be

said for all.

A love for flying keeps them going — 12-hour shifts (or more), 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week — providing critical transport and cover for the troops on the ground.

Who are these iron men of the aviation corps?

They are the crew chiefs of the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

They are the middlemen in the battle to keep the battalion's Black Hawks airborne. These Soldiers help maintain the "birds," facilitating the transport of troops while covering down on the pilots.

For two such crew chiefs, Spc. Brandon Arther and Spc. Dmitri Schornick from the Alpha Company "Werewolves", 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, they are at their best skirting above the ground at 120 miles an hour, eyeing the ground below for potential threats.

"Flying is like an extra duty because our primary mission is to ensure the helicopter is properly maintained at all times," explained Schornick, a native of Bay St. Louis, Miss. "We are part of a team that runs two 12-hour shifts, give or take, depending on mission requirements, all week with every ninth or tenth day for down time."

Arther noted that whether flying at night or during the day, the hours are long.

"Usually, we start getting ready about two hours before our first scheduled mission. During this time, we perform the necessary preflight aircraft inspections, topping off fluids and logging dis-

crepancies," said Arther, a native of Roswell, N.M. "When we have completed all that, then we mount our guns. There's a whole process before we go anywhere."

Anywhere might include flying to Fallujah with stops at several forward operating bases along the way. "Add-on missions" offer unexpected detours, in-flight reenlistment ceremonies and extra hours in the air.

"The downside of it all is the spur-of-the-moment stuff, like transporting extra people that were not scheduled for pick up. And flying around Baghdad every day can get monotonous, sometimes, too," Schornick said.

"The best part of what we do is when we fly north and can see the mountains and the lakes. It's different," explained Arther, a three-year Army veteran.

From running local "milk runs" to more dangerous tasks that take them into the very heart of the Sunni Triangle, both aviation mechanics are driven by their passion.

"My father was a 'grunt' until he reclassified into aviation and became a crew chief. I guess I was always interested in what he did, but I wanted to fly and I figured this was a good place to start," Arther said.

"I've always been mechanically inclined, and aviation offers me an opportunity to enhance a future civilian career," added Schornick.

At the end of each day, the crew chiefs routinely inspect their craft once again.

"It's called a '10-14' inspection. For every 10 hours of flight time or every 14 days, we inspect the helicopters," Arther explained. "In the States, we average about 10 hours every two weeks, but here we fly considerably more hours in a shorter period of time."

With inspection and maintenance comes the unenviable task of paperwork.

"We have to maintain both inspection and maintenance logs, a paper trail in case of an accident because the first thing investigators look for is human error," Arther added.

In addition to a daily fare of missions and maintenance, crew chiefs are also responsible for training their ground-pounding counterparts how to safely board and exit the aircraft in preparation for air-assault operations.

"Taking our guys on a mission and dropping them off for a raid is pretty exciting," Schornick said with a smile.

"These guys are real heroes, but they don't get a lot of recognition for what they do," said Sgt. 1st Class Russell Kirby, the company first sergeant for A Co., 2-227th Aviation. "We are one of the few units that are in full operation around the clock, running multiple missions plus add-ons. And there are always add-ons."



Spc. Brandon Arther, a Black Hawk crew chief with the 1st Cavalry Division's Alpha Company "Werewolves," 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, scans the ground below for possible enemy activity and attack on the aircraft.

Commanders relate lessons learned in Iraq

By Dennis Ryan
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — The 3rd Infantry Division, the “Rock of the Marne,” led the march on Baghdad March 20, 2003, and Maj. Gen. Buford Blount, the unit’s commander then, recently called it “the fastest and longest attack in history.”

Blount, Maj. Gen. Martin Dempsey of the 1st Armored Division and Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno of the 4th Infantry Division spoke about their units’ operations in Iraq Oct. 27 at the Association of the U.S. Army annual meeting at the Washington Convention Center.

3ID at tip of spear
Blount described how his 21,000 Soldiers in 10,000 vehicles saw the enemy first, got off the first shot and made the first kill. He attributed his success to correct Army doctrine, sound training, decisive leadership, effective combination of movement and fire-

power, mobile command and control and great equipment.

“Our tanks and Bradleys performed magnificently,” Blount said. “We only lost one tank when an auxiliary power unit caught fire. I never lost one of our vehicles to enemy fire.”

The general told of an unexpected benefit from the men wearing protective suits. The troops wore chemical suits over their underwear, so they stowed their uniforms in duffle bags strapped onto the sides of the vehicles. The wall of bags served as makeshift reactive armor of sorts by causing RPG rounds to explode.

He said this happened 20 times, but it did cause a lot of Soldiers to have to borrow mismatched articles of clothing from their comrades.

All roads lead to Baghdad
The 3rd attacked along two roads and eventually ended up on one road. It then took two days for the outfit to pass one point. Blount said he spoke with his command-

ers by satellite mostly, but did meet twice in person with them.

Blount mapped out how the Rock of the Marne was engaged in nine separate fights over a 24-hour period during the push through the Karbala Gap. They had to immediately switch over to the role of peacekeepers after the fall of Baghdad, which entailed a different type of struggle.

The commander said regular Iraqi soldiers took off their uniforms at that point and would fire an RPG and then stand in the middle of a group of people, making identification of the enemy difficult. The irregular Fedayeen forces never did wear uniforms.

4ID detours from plan
Odierno told how the 4th Infantry Division was scheduled to attack from Turkey, but their 37 ships had to ultimately pass through the Suez Canal and land in Kuwait in early April 2003. The extra month did allow more time for planning and training.

The ships were unloaded by the

12th of April and the 4th moved 800 kilometers to the north of Baghdad and attacked. The war had evolved into a low-intensity conflict by this time.

“Every Soldier had to be prepared to attack — mechanics and cooks too,” Odierno said. “We had artillery men who were conducting patrols.”

The fight in Iraq is also a decentralized one and commanders on the ground should be given latitude to make decisions Odierno said.

“You have to judge civil actions with lethal actions,” he said. “There are difficult decisions every day.”

1AD adapts to urban war
Dempsey and the 1st Armored arrived in Baghdad in June of 2003 and the tankers were now engaged in urban warfare.

“In combat, lead from the front,” Dempsey said. “In civil affairs, lead from the rear. We were not the same division when we left. We made major changes. We trained

while in contact with the enemy.”
The 1st Armored created tank and marksmanship ranges to better train the troops in an extremely complex environment.

Dempsey said 21st century technology has caused a major change in Soldiers’ personal lives.

E-mail puts family at front
“Your family goes to war with you,” Dempsey said. “Soldiers would e-mail wives as soon as they got off patrol.”

The general sad he did not consider that detrimental. He sent an officer back to the division’s home base in Germany when they got extended to explain the move to the families. When the Soldiers called or e-mailed home, their spouses had already dealt with the situation.

“It empowered the unit. We acknowledged the constant link between the Soldier and the family at home,” Dempsey said.

Editor’s note: Dennis Ryan writes for the Pentagon newspaper at Fort Myer, Va.

ARMOR *Continued from Page Three*

for more kits. The current requirement is for 13,872 kits.

During a recent visit to Letterkenny Army Depot, Pa., one facility producing the kits, Motsek said he was particularly impressed with the motivation of the workers he saw. One worker, who operated a laser-cutting machine that cuts the steel used in the kits, hadn’t taken a single day off — not weekends, not holidays – since starting the job seven months earlier.

“No sir, I have a mission to do” was the employee’s response, Motsek said.

In addition to Letterkenny, other Army

facilities producing the kits are Anniston Army Depot, Ala.; Red River Army Depot, Texas; Sierra Army Depot, Calif.; Watervliet Arsenal, N.Y.; Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.; and Crane Ammunition Activity, Ind.

Fueling the motivation of workers at these facilities, Motsek said, are the testimonials they regularly receive from Iraq from troops who credit the kits with saving their lives. “That’s a real motivator, when you hear soldiers telling stories about how they were able to survive because of their up-armored equipment,” he said.

While the military moves double-time to

up-armor its humvees, it’s also producing add-on armor kits for other vehicles in Iraq.

Motsek said the Army began anticipating this requirement and laying the groundwork for a quick response even before U.S. Central Command passed it down.

So far, the Army has installed armor add-on kits on almost 400 heavy expanded mobile tactical trucks, or HEMTTs, about 35 palletized load system tactical trucks and 450 vehicles from the Army’s family of medium tactical vehicles, he said.

In addition, Motsek said the Army is in the process of buying the new armored support

vehicle, which he describes as a “mini Stryker vehicle” that’s larger and has more armor protection than even the up-armored or enhanced humvees.

The Army currently has 70 ASVs, all en route to Iraq, where they will support convoy movement, he said.

“For us, the bottom line is getting this equipment to the theater as quickly as possible,” Motsek summarized.

“When you’re putting people in harm’s way, you want to ensure that they have everything they need to protect them as they carry out their missions.”

AMBER *Continued from Page Six*

how many bags of seed they would receive.” One hectare equals 2.47 acres.

Evaluating the progress and the process of the distribution, McCoy said he was pleased at the relative smoothness of the operation.

“Looking at things, it would appear that every farmer is getting their share and most everyone seems to be happy,” he said. “The council members have done a good job of documenting everything so we can keep track of all this as this is just the beginning.”

Farmers collecting their seeds did indeed seem happy as they waited their turn to load the seeds onto their vehicles.

“We really appreciate this wonderful gift from U.S. Soldiers,” said

one excited farmer who went on to note that receiving the seeds during the time of Ramadan made it especially thoughtful. “It shows the U.S. understands about our culture, about the giving to the needy at this time. It is wonderful. This will help me feed my family and provide wheat to sell in the markets. God is great.”

One farmer estimated that one ton of the seed could yield as much as four to five tons of wheat.

But McCoy went on to explain that the seeds were more than just a gift; the delivery had another purpose.

“If a man has food in his belly, has money to pay his bills, that man is generally happy. If a man is generally happy, he’s less likely to pick up a gun and fight against us.”

DEPLOYMENTS *Continued from Page One*

deploying the guardsmen to Kuwait before moving them into Iraq, they discarded that idea in light of the high threat level in Kuwait, the official said.

“The bottom line was, why deploy them now?” he said. “We keep them at home station, we keep them out of harm’s way for a longer period for time, we give them more opportunities to train and they get to stay home with their families for Christmas.”

The official said the 42nd Infantry Division’s deployment to Iraq will mark an important milestone. “This is the first reserve (-component) division to deploy into combat since World War II,” he noted.

This did not include previous operations in Kosovo and Bosnia, which, he observed, “were more peace enforcement and stability operations.” In contrast, Iraq “is full blown, close-with-and-destroy-the-enemy kind of stuff. This is combat.”

Formed in 1917 from hand-picked National Guard units spanning 26 states and the District of Columbia, the 42nd was dubbed “The Rainbow Division” by Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who was instrumental in forming it.

The division currently includes units in eight states: New York, Vermont, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Kentucky, Florida and Illinois.

The Rainbow Division has been an active contributor to the war on terror. Following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, battalions from New York City armories – the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry; 1st Battalion, 101st Cavalry; 642nd Division Aviation Support Battalion; and the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment – provided immediate emergency response.

In addition, thousands of the division’s New York Army National Guard Soldiers and its division headquarters supported security and recovery operations in Manhattan as part of Joint Task Force 42 following 9/11. Hundreds of Rainbow Division Soldiers served more than a year of active duty in this role.

Additional Soldiers from the division have deployed to Afghanistan supporting Operation Enduring Freedom or providing homeland-security missions for Operation Noble Eagle.



Above: Soldiers from the North Dakota National Guard's C Company, 141st Engineer Battalion, perform a route sanitation of a roadway south of Hibhib, near Ba'qubah, Iraq, Oct. 22.

Right: Spc. David Feldman, a combat engineer with the North Dakota National Guard's C Company, 141st Engineer Battalion, pops his head up from his Meerkat mine-detecting vehicle during a route-sanitation sweep on a roadway south of Hibhib, near Ba'qubah, Iraq, Oct. 22. Feldman is from Beach, N.D.



'Trailblazers' clear the roads of IEDs

Story and photos by
Sgt. Kimberly Snow
196th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

BA'QUBAH, Iraq — At 5:00 a.m. on a cool October morning, all is quiet but for the ever-present humming of generators.

Hulks of metal giants glint under the starlight.

Soldiers from the North Dakota Army National Guard's 141st Engineer Battalion begin filtering out into the pre-dawn chill, their duty day already underway.

Pre-combat checks and inspections complete and convoy brief concluded, they bypass the five-ton trucks, scrapers and graders and load into five humvees and one Meerkat and roll out to begin trailblazing.

"We search out [improvised explosive devices], hasty minefields and ambush sites," said Staff Sgt. Cody Hertz, a combat engineer from Bismarck, N.D. "But what it basically boils down to is finding IEDs. That's the biggest threat now on the roadways."

While most convoys traveling the roads of Iraq drive as fast as safety

allows, the "Trailblazers" maintain a speed of only 20 to 25 mph. During these route-clearance operations, every Soldier in every vehicle scans the roadway, median and shoulders looking for signs of disturbance or anything that seems out of place, intent on seeking out the deadly devices.

"We've been over this route so many times that every driver and [truck commander] knows every pothole and landmark on the route," said Sgt. Jed A. Korth, the Alpha Team leader. "We usually notice when something's not right."

When they do find something suspicious, such as a recent ground disturbance, a dead animal or something as simple as a trash bag or cardboard box, the Meerkat is sent in to investigate.

"I'd say it's probably about the best piece of equipment we've got here," said Spc. Matthew A. Davenport. "We're lucky to have it. It's not something everybody can use because of its size; it's small, so you can only put small people in it."

The Meerkat, a single-occupant mine-detection vehicle resembling an oversized, armored dune buggy,

features a three-meter wide array that uses both metal detection and ground-penetrating radar sensors. Should a blast occur, a V-shaped undercarriage directs the blast away from the vehicle, protecting the driver.

The vehicle's manufacturer, the Johannesburg, South Africa-based RSD, a division of Dorbyl Ltd., claims that the vehicle is capable of taking the blast of an anti-tank mine or 15 pounds of TNT.

And their claims have held up.

The vehicle has so far weathered four blasts without serious injury to the drivers.

"I was blown up in it," said Davenport. "I kind of thrive on that stuff, so it was interesting. It handles pretty well, and you don't get jerked around that bad. You're definitely safe in there."

The troops also employ the

"Buffalo," a mine-protected control vehicle nicknamed for the vehicle's manufacturer — the Charleston, S.C.-based Buffalo Technical Solutions Group. The blast-resistant vehicle features a hydraulic arm used to uncover a suspected IED site and move suspect items from the road.

But the Meerkat and Buffalo are

"We've been over this route so many times that every driver and [truck commander] knows every pothole and landmark on the route."

— Sgt. Jed A. Korth

not the only items in the unit's arsenal. They also use more traditional engineering equipment in their mission to rid the routes of the deadly roadside bombs.

The day following the route clearance, the troops again

head out on their mission to make the roads safer.

But this day, they also bring along a scraper and a grader to "sanitize" the route — remove brush and debris from the roadside and median, leveling the surface and making it harder to emplace and hide the

roadside bombs.

The Soldiers of C Company have so far located about 60 IEDs from the roadside, but not without incident. They have been ambushed by rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire on several occasions and endured six IED blasts, including one that killed Spc. James J. "Tugboat" Holmes, a Soldier from F Battery, 188th Air Defense Artillery, who volunteered to come to Iraq with the Trailblazers.

"Everyone was shell-shocked. We walked around in a daze for a couple of days," said 1st Sgt. Keith A. Hertz, the company's first sergeant.

Because IEDs are the leading cause of wounding and death of coalition forces, the engineers said they realize the importance of their mission. They compete within the platoons to see who can find the most and constantly strive to stay ahead of the IED emplacers.

"When an IED goes off on the road, the first thing I do is run over and look," he said. "When was the last time we went over that? Did we miss it, or did they get a chance to set it after we went by. We take it personal when we miss one."

The place to access the latest MNF-I/MNC-I news and information is online. Check out www.mnf-iraq.com to stay informed.



www.help4soldiers.com

OR CALL*

Northern Iraq — DNV 302-553-9525

Central Iraq — DNV 302-558-5546

Southern Iraq — DNV 318-833-1322

*Note: All calls are kept confidential and callers may remain anonymous

Information, Resources, and Referrals for Concerns About:

— Mental Health/Combat Stress (Homefront and relationship issues, depression, suicidal thoughts, etc)

— Sexual Assault- (Includes Medical, Mental health, Legal, and Chaplain Services).



Left: Petty Officer 2nd Class Tim Frederickson adjusts Chief Petty Officer Randolph Lawson's bomb-suit helmet, making sure it's securely in place before Lawson inspects a suspected improvised explosive device. **Below:** EOD Tactical Commander Chief Petty Officer Randolph Lawson peeks into a portable toilet where a suspected IED has been placed.



Above: Explosive ordnance disposal technicians prepare to deploy their remote-operated bomb-disposal robot to get a closer look at a suspected improvised explosive device. **Right:** Explosive ordnance disposal technician Petty Officer 2nd Class Bradley Sharp detonates an explosive charge, destroying a suspected improvised explosive device.



EOD unit takes care of Baghdad bombs

Story and photos by
Sgt. Clinton Firstbrook
Scimitar staff

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Four or five calls a day since August.

That is the number of suspected improvised explosive devices or unexploded ordnance the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's explosive ordnance disposal unit has responded to. The unit's U.S. Navy personnel are attached to the 1st Cavalry Division.

Armed with a 52-pound bomb suit and a remote-operated bomb-disposal robot, this three-member EOD team travels throughout Baghdad to render safe and dispose of any ordnance.

"There's never really an average day," said EOD technician Petty Officer 2nd Class Bradley Sharp. "Sometimes we spend hour after hour out in the red zone, and others we take care of business and come right back to base. We need to do our job so other units can do theirs."

Because they're on call 24 hours a day, Sharp says they live by the phone.

"When it rings the first thing that runs through your mind is the sequence of what you're going to do when you get to the site," said EOD technician Petty Officer 2nd Class Tim Frederickson. "Your steps and procedures are the same, but you're looking at something different each time. That's why I like my job."

Earlier this week EOD techs came across a vehicle-borne IED which held 22 120mm

projectiles, one 500-pound bomb, one 250-pound bomb and 200 pounds of handmade explosives.

"Anytime I'm driving down the road, I suspect everything is an IED," said Chief Petty Officer Randolph Lawson, the EOD tactical commander. "Cardboard boxes, concrete blocks, bags of trash — you never know. It feels good whenever we get some bad-guy ammo, but we couldn't do our job without the guys who set up our security at each site."

While their mission is to render safe and dispose of any ordnance, that hasn't stopped these Sailors from finding other arms caches.

"We were on another IED call when we started looking around a building with our robot to make sure it was clear," said Frederickson. "I spotted a burlap sack among plastic trash bags, and something just didn't seem right to me."

After clearing away the debris, Frederickson discovered 21 82 mm mortars, 10 rocket-propelled grenades, a 60mm mortar tube with stand and around 5,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition stacked in a four-foot-by-four-foot hole dug in alley on Haifa Street.

Despite their extra finds, Lawson says that they're just doing their job.

"A Marine's dream is charging a machine gun nest and taking it out, saving his buddies," said Lawson. "For EOD guys, it's going downrange in a bomb suit with bullets flying overhead disarming an IED. My team and I are ready for that call."

Soldiers make all the difference in the Army's first Stryker brigade

By Spc. Blair Larson
139th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — The Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Arrowhead Brigade Combat Team) made history as the Army's first Stryker Brigade to fight in combat. Throughout their year-long deployment to Iraq, the Army's newest vehicle and its highly trained Stryker Soldiers have proven themselves to be the flexible, maneuverable force the Army envisioned.

The Arrowhead Brigade is the first of six planned Stryker brigades. Based in Fort Lewis, Wash., the 3-2 Inf. became part of a new Army initiative to establish a unit that could bridge the operational gap between slow-to-deploy heavy forces and underpowered light forces. With more than 3,600 Soldiers and 300 vehicles, the brigade is capable of conducting a wide range of military operations in various settings.

The brigade deployed to Iraq with eight battalions: the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment; 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment; 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment; 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment; 296th Brigade Support Battalion and the 276th Engineer Battalion. Also organic to the brigade is the 18th Engineer Company; Headquarters and Headquarters Company; the 209th Military Intelligence Company; the 334th Signal Company; Company C, 52nd Infantry Regiment; the 1060th Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment and the 1290th Tactical Psyop Detachment.

Traditional infantry brigades are only organized with these different units for large training exercises or for war. In the brigade, these units are organic and are able to train together year-round.

Though the new Stryker vehicle is important, the highly trained Stryker Soldiers are the ones who have made the unit a success, leaders say.

"The Stryker Brigade is not about the vehicle. It's about the Soldiers and the noncommissioned officers and officers," said Lt. Col. Buck James, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. "We are building the next generation of leaders and preparing for the future of the Army."

The Soldiers spent nearly three years training to become familiar with the new Stryker vehicles. They underwent an operational evaluation and certification to prepare for this deployment. The Arrowhead Soldiers endured back-to-back, intense training at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., in the year before they deployed.

"Our Soldiers are hardened from three years of nothing but training and focusing on our mission, whether it was in a training environment or a combat environment," said Col. Michael Rounds, the 3rd Brigade commander.



Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson

Soldiers of Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division Stryker Brigade Combat Team patrol the streets of Tal Afar, Iraq, Aug. 1 as part of Operation Sykes Hammer. The Soldiers also assisted the Iraqi National Guard in executing cordon-and-search operations in neighborhoods of Tal Afar suspected of harboring terrorists.

The training was meant to assess the brigade's ability to conduct early entry and combat operations in a mid- to low-intensity environment against an unconventional enemy.

"Ever since we completed JRTC, we believed that we could succeed in combat," said Sgt. Rob Williams, from Company B, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. "We have a lot of young specialists and sergeants who really make the difference in our ability to shoot, move and communicate."

The nation focused on the first brigade to use the Stryker vehicle in combat as, time after time, the Stryker vehicle took a punch and continued to fight, proving itself as a significant addition to the Army's force.

"I was impressed with its capabilities during training, but it's difficult to imagine its capa-

bilities until you put it to the types of tests we see here every day," said Rounds.

In many ways, this deployment was a test to see how the SBCT would hold up in combat. The Soldiers of 3-2 SBCT met the challenge, continually focusing on ways to more effectively make use of the brigade's numerous capabilities. They've revised their tactical procedures according to lessons learned in the field from previous engagements. As the first SBCT in combat, they have set the standard for the units that will follow them.

"We literally wrote the book on how to use the vehicle in combat," said 1st Lt. Nick Kardonsky, the executive officer for Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment.

With organic snipers, mortarmen, anti-armor sections as well as heavy machine guns, the Stryker Brigade Combat Team has given lead-

ers an enormous amount of flexibility in the way they lead troops in combat.

"As a Stryker platoon leader, you've got so many assets at your disposal that you just don't find in a light or mechanized unit," said Kardonsky.

In one year, the brigade operated in a larger area than what they had expected to prior to coming to Iraq. They were called on to support major operations when violence heated up in Al Kut, Tal Afar and Najaf. In each of these cases, a battalion of Stryker Soldiers packed up and moved within 24-72 hours.

"Doing these extra missions was not standard for us but within our capabilities," said Rounds.

The Vehicle

The Stryker Brigade was called upon for these extra missions because commanders in Iraq took notice of the success the brigade was having with the vehicle in northern Iraq. Its advantages of speed and mobility made it a valuable asset to the commanders on the ground.

"We were chosen for these missions because of the outstanding tactical mobility and agility the Stryker has. We have the ability to cover a lot of ground quickly," said James.

The Stryker was designed to operate in an urban environment. It is large enough to carry a whole squad of infantrymen, unlike the Bradley vehicle, which will only hold half a squad. It travels streets on eight tires instead of tracks, which are much quieter.

The Soldiers

The Stryker Brigade is an infantry-centric unit.

"Even though we were confident in the Stryker's abilities, it still takes people to make it a reality," said Rounds. "We have great Soldiers and leaders who are always doing the right thing at the right time and making a difference in the parts of Iraq we've been asked to fight in."

The Soldiers of the Arrowhead Brigade worked non-stop conducting missions from infantry raids to humanitarian assistance. According to Rounds, it is the incredible effort on the part of the Soldiers and leaders each day that has contributed to the success of the brigade.

"These young Soldiers are incredibly impressive and adaptable," said Lt. Col. Karl Reed, the commander of 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. "Their ability to be in a situation and adapt to it and out-think and out-fight the enemy is incredible."

During the brigade's deployment, a number of Stryker Soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice while doing their part to support freedom in Iraq. The legacy of those Soldiers will not be forgotten by those they left behind.

"As Soldiers we understand that we are fighting for our country and for freedom, but we also fight for each other," said Rounds. "The deaths of Soldiers reinforce in our minds that what we're doing here is right and we will work to honor their memory by bringing this mission to a close."

Marine goes gold with never-quit attitude

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Sarah A. Beavers
24th Marine Expeditionary
Unit Public Affairs

CAMP AL TAQADDUM, Iraq — Following a road decidedly less traveled, one sergeant from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit received an unusual reward for his dedication - a commission to second lieutenant.

With a career spanning 17 years from recruit to officer, 2nd Lt. Earl Trouerbach, 36, a Rochester, N.Y., native with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 263, struggled against time and a possible career-ending injury to become a Marine officer.

“Trouerbach has shown us all the never-quit attitude needed to succeed in the Marine Corps and in life,” said Sgt. Maj. John Rethage, 39, a Pittsburgh native and the HMM-263 sergeant major.

Trouerbach originally enlisted in 1987, spending most of his tour as a radio operator with 2nd Radio Battalion, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force. After serving nine months in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, he was honorably discharged from active duty in the summer of 1991.

“When I first got back from Desert Storm, I was really pumped up,” said Trouerbach. “But at the time, there weren’t any more boat-spaces left (for my military occupation), and my wife said she couldn’t take me being deployed anymore, so I got out.”

Three years after his discharge, having worked part-time as a deputy sheriff and full-time as a drill instructor for convicted felons, he decided to re-enlist as a reservist.

“I wanted to come back to active duty, but they said I’d lose too much rank. So I joined the (Marine Corps) Reserves, and was promoted to sergeant at my second drill.”

After serving four years as an assault amphibian vehicle crewman with Alpha Company, 4th AAV Battalion, out of Norfolk, Va., he decided to move back to Rochester and return to school for his degree. At the same time, he re-entered the reserves, joining at 8th Tank Battalion, 4th Marine Division, in Rochester.

While there, he graduated from the University of New York with an associate’s degree, pinned on staff sergeant in 1999 and became the regional vice president for a national car-rental chain.

But the success he found in the civilian sector would be short-lived, as his company was soon dissolved,



Second Lt. Earl Trouerbach of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit receives his long-awaited gold bars during his commissioning ceremony at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq. Trouerbach, 36, is a Rochester, N.Y., native with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 263, the aviation combat element of the 24th MEU.

leaving him without a full-time job. He decided this was his sign to return to the Marine Corps. In July 2001, he returned to active duty, a corporal at age 34, with 14 years of service. While attending his new MOS training in Pensacola, Fla., he followed his first sergeant’s advice to submit a packet to the Meritorious Commissioning Program.

Accepted to MCP in April of 2002, he reported to Officer Candidates School in October of the same year. Following a successful first five weeks of training, he was suddenly faced with his biggest hurdle yet. An attempt to beat the obstacle-course record would leave him with a career-altering injury and temporarily halt his pursuit of a commission.

After coming up short by mere seconds on his first attempt, Trouerbach challenged the course record again. Halfway through, he jumped over a wall too fast, tearing a ligament in his knee completely in half and causing his joint to become precariously unstable.

Refusing to quit, he spent the next four weeks in excruciating pain as he gritted his way through at least ten more events, including the combat readiness course. This was in addition to his five-hour-a-day physical-training regimen. Even with his injury, he scored more than 290 points on his physical fitness test, completing his three-mile run

just seconds over 19 minutes.

“My platoon sergeant and platoon commander did everything they could to make sure I didn’t miss any events (so I could graduate),” he said. “I used everything I could (to stabilize my knee) — even duct tape. Medical (eventually) gave me a brace for it. They didn’t do an MRI, so we didn’t know how bad it was.”

While combating his torturous condition and the looming prospect of a medical discharge, he developed a concern for his ability to positively influence the other struggling members of his unit.

“I never allowed anyone to give me any pity,” he said. “I just kept trying to motivate the other candidates while I struggled with my injury. (I was afraid) they would look at me as being weak if I couldn’t accomplish a task. I wanted them to still (be able to) respect me, and look to me for inspiration.”

Having just completed the final event — Small Unit Leadership Evaluation II — with a score of 98 percent, Trouerbach entered the ninth week of training second in his

platoon and in the top ten percent of his company of more than 300 candidates. The only events left to complete before graduation were the 10-mile hike, the final PFT and a final run of the obstacle course.

He made it more than five miles on the hike before medical staff intervened, determining he was in no condition to complete the training.

“Being prior enlisted gives (officers) an appreciation for enlisted (Marines) and helps them become a better leader.”

— Maj. Heath

return (though), saying, ‘If you can have your surgery, get better and be capable of performing your duties, you can come back and do it all over again.’”

Surgery was his only option to remedy what the doctors already considered ‘irreparable damage.’ Bedridden for two weeks and forbidden to run for at least three months, Trouerbach soon began the arduous process of returning to full duty, despite various recovery complications.

“I had gotten a blood clot in my

knee, so (the) blood wouldn’t circulate through my leg. They had to cut my leg open to release the pressure. (For awhile), I had to get three stomach shots of blood thinners a day. Every time I’d lower my leg, blood would rush into it and fill it like a balloon. It was a very painful process.”

A month after his surgery, he inquired about an opportunity to return to OCS and begin the training all over again. Then the worst news of all hit him. He was informed that he’d be too old by the time he graduated to qualify for another chance. According to Title 10 of the US Code, a Marine must be commissioned by his 35th birthday to be eligible for OCS. That was a deadline he wouldn’t be able to meet. After contacting his congressman, who proved to be powerless in this situation, he temporarily shelved his dreams to be commissioned and checked into HMM-263 in September 2003. It was here he met the person who re-ignited his aspiration to become a Marine officer.

“One day we were talking, and he mentioned that he went to OCS, so I asked him why he hadn’t been commissioned,” said Maj. Heath Lawson, 37, a Bremerton, Wash., native and a maintenance officer with HMM-263. “When he told me about his knee, it just didn’t seem right, so I helped him send off a package to (fix his records).”

According to Lawson, the package made it to the commandant of the Marine Corps in less than a month.

“I was just trying to let him know that there was still hope,” Lawson said.

After a successful petition to the Board for Corrections of Naval Records and receiving a written endorsement from the commandant of the Marine Corps in September, Trouerbach was promoted to 2nd lieutenant a month later, on Oct. 03. His commission was backdated to June 20, which would have the date of his original OCS graduation.

“Being prior enlisted gives (officers) an appreciation for enlisted (Marines) and helps them become a better leader,” said Lawson. “He was a hard-working sergeant, and you knew just by the way he carried himself that he had great potential.”

After the tribulations Trouerbach had met and conquered, he reflected on why he desired to push himself beyond the limits to become a Marine officer.

“(I think) life is all about creating and seizing opportunities,” he said, and “the Marine Corps is full of them.”

Soldier instructor makes aerobics fun

Story and photo by
Spc. Steven J. Schneider
28th Public Affairs Detachment

BALAD, Iraq — High speed, non-stop and fun are just a few ways to describe the aerobics program Staff Sgt. Adrian B. Woodson, of 644th Transportation Company, has started at Logistics Support Area Anaconda here.

It started off as one day a week in July, but as his class grew in size from about 10 to 50-60 people a night, it not only outgrew the number of classes but also the aerobics room.

Classes are offered three times week — Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 6 p.m. in the LSA Anaconda Fitness Center — for free. Often the class must be held on the basketball courts because of the numbers attending.

Woodson also does aerobics with units for physical training in the morning.

Woodson said in his class there is no rank and he isn't "Staff Sergeant Woodson" there. He's just "Woody," as he likes to be called.

"It's a place you can go for an hour and a half to forget that people are shooting at you," he said.

The hour to hour-and-a-half class consists of stretching, 30 minutes of cardio and muscle-failure workouts. He said the reaction he



Staff Sgt. Adrian B. Woodson, an aerobics instructor from the 644th Transportation Company, leads his Logistics Support Area Anaconda aerobics class from the center of a circular formation so he can interact with his students better.

gets is plenty of payment for his time.

Woodson has taught aerobics everywhere he's been since he was certified as an instructor at Fort Gordon, Ga., in 1995. He didn't find aerobics appealing before trying

it, he said, but after his brother and aunt, who are both aerobics instructors and in the Army, got him started, he never looked back.

"After the first class I went to, I was hooked," Woodson said.

Woodson said he's never had a negative response to his classes but has never seen his students react the way they have here. He said he knew once he started his workouts, people would start to come.

According to Quincy Richardson, the LSA Anaconda fitness center manager, Woodson is succeeding in attracting all kinds of people to his program just by doing the job.

"He has really improved the aerobic clientele overnight," Richardson said. "When he came in to ask to instruct, he told me his class would be a success."

Woodson doesn't have a traditional aerobics class. His class turns into a circle with him jumping up and down, pumping the students up as hip hop, jazz or R&B music keep the beat going in the background.

Woodson said he picked the music for people from all generations, and all generations attend, from privates to colonels.

Woodson's circular formation allows him to interact with students better, he said.

"I have had nothing but positive feedback," he said.

While everyone has fun, they still get a great workout. The class can help greatly with physical fitness in the field by providing a way to release tension, helping with cardio fitness and stamina and by helping build muscles not used in regular workout plans, Woodson said.



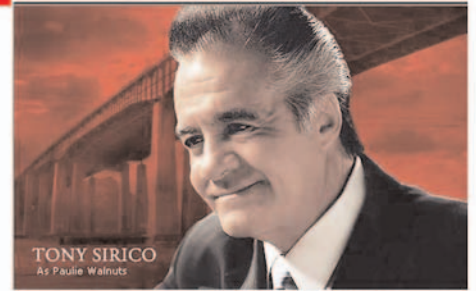
Sgt. Dan Purcell

New gym equipment

Staff Sgt. Sheldon Gardner, of Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade (Aviation) Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, unpacks a crate of free-weights at the main gymnasium at Camp Taji, Iraq. The weights were part of a \$171,000 overall equipment package that ranges from easy-curl bars, Olympic squat and heavy-duty locking benches to dumbbells.



The Sopranos



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